

Ep #107: Love In Practice



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Natalie Brown

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This is *Weight Loss Success*, with Natalie Brown, episode 107.

Welcome to *Weight Loss Success* with Natalie Brown. If you're a successful woman who is ready to stop struggling with your weight, you're in the right place. You'll learn everything you need to know to lose weight for the last time in bitesize pieces. Here's your host, certified life and weight coach Natalie Brown.

Hey everybody, I have been struggling with some things personally recently, and as a result, I feel this heavy sense of melancholy settle over me on some days. Two days ago was one of those days for me. I felt like a cloud of darkness was just hanging over me, trying to envelop me all day. I went about my business but quieter, and with my limbs full of sand, it felt like. I woke up the next day, and I felt a little lighter but still pretty heavy throughout the morning.

Then, I went to pick up my daughter from school, and as I was walking out of the school back to my car, the sun came out. It's still pretty full-on winter where I live. In fact, it's been snowing off and on for the past few days, but as we tip closer to spring, like the earth literally tips closer to the sun, the days are a little bit longer, and the sun is a little warmer when it's out. It's incremental, but it's an observable difference from, say, December.

And I had this moment where that thought, the sun is a little warmer today, reminded me that just like the seasons, feelings are always changing, life is always moving forward. The earth is continually turning. This challenging place, though it feels heavy while I'm here, is temporary, and just like the weather, I don't control what it does, but I can choose to show up for whatever it is.

I can wear a sweater when it's chilly, boots when it snows, a sundress in the summer sun. I can breathe deep that little break in the snow and soak in the warmer sunshine. I can marvel at the beauty of fall leaves. I can also be annoyed at the inner vision that settles over my valley in January and

Ep #107: Love In Practice

irritated at strings of 100 degree days in the summer. It's all moving and shifting constantly, though slowly.

So, I allow the melancholy. I wonder about it when it's here. I get curious, but I let it be here, and I let moments of winter turning spring sun warms me and remind me. It's a little warmer today than yesterday. That doesn't really relate to today's topic, that story, but I just felt like someone needed to hear it. So, there you go.

I really love John Mayer's music. There's something about a singer/songwriter and a guitar or a piano that just sings to my soul. I like lots of varied kinds of music, but the music I love most typically involves those two elements, beautiful singing and the playing of an instrument. Anyway, one of my favorite lines in one of his songs is love ain't a thing; love is a verb. A line of a song and a concept that just speaks to my heart.

Love is not a thing that just exists. It's not words. It's action. I would say that technically it's a feeling that inspires action, and that's why this concept is so important. You can say I love you, but if you don't feel it, you don't show up that way. If you don't feel the love, it can't spark love-fueled action. And you can feel love and take loving action without having to say any words.

The bridge of this song is literally, you have to show, show, show me, over and over. Love is a verb. You hear me talk about injecting love into your weight loss or health journey quite a bit, and I've given you examples here and there through the life of the podcast, but I wanted to be super clear and address this specifically today. Paint you a picture of what I mean when I say come from love for you as you go through this process.

Many of you may wonder what that looks like in practice; I think many of your brains want to believe the things you're doing and the way you're approaching this whole thing is with love, but shame and guilt, obligation, and inadequacy can all drive action and pretend to be love. They can disguise themselves as helpful. They can make you believe that it's truly

Ep #107: Love In Practice

from love for you that you are denying yourself sugar for the rest of time, but it's not necessarily.

That's not to say that denying yourself sugar can never come from love. It totally can, but not always. So, how do you know the difference? Let's talk about what love is a verb; love-fueled action coming from love looks like in different areas of this process of change, along with what it's not. So, you can start identifying the difference for you.

I want to preface this by saying that though I can describe and explain it ultimately, it's going to be an individual experience, and being able to connect with you capital YOU. The core of you that is love and knows love is going to be important. You are not your mistakes. You are not your thoughts. You are not your body or your past, or your roles. You are loved divinely and innately whole.

But as you go through and experience life and emotions without the ability to differentiate, you start to fracture and build walls and develop scar tissue and start to identify as your labels and your judgments. You allow the world and its beliefs about who you should be to dictate who you are. To me, no, where is this more evident that we are separate. That at the core of us we are love.

Then, when we talk unkindly to ourselves, we notice how we feel. The pain we experience specifically in that situation is because it goes against who we are at our core. It's the deep discomfort of ignoring our goodness and treating it as weakness, of refusing to honor the love we deserve, of using our missteps as evidence of our worth. It's out of alignment with the love we are at our core, so it feels terrible.

Now, this isn't to say that when you act in alignment that it will always feel amazing. Sometimes coming from love acting from love will mean opening up to the experience of being a human with all of the discomfort that comes. Sometimes, love, fueled action supports your growth, and that feels uncomfortable because it's new.

Ep #107: Love In Practice

So, don't misunderstand this concept to mean that if you come from love, you feel amazing, and this process will be easy. It won't, but it will feel completely different. It will feel lighter, not necessarily better. It will lead to learning to real growth, effective change, and lasting results because changing how and why we do changes the outcome. So, let's start with love when it comes to your goal or your reasons for wanting to make changes.

If you come from love when you set your goal, your goal sounds like what you are looking forward to, what you're excited to create, the feelings you will feel, the things you will believe about you. It takes into account that you are a human that will still experience a human life and all that comes with it, but it focuses on the skills you'll build to handle that life the way you want to. It's multifaceted and centered around an identity that you want to embody.

For example, this may be your goal statement. My goal is to nourish my body with food, honor what it needs, appreciate it for all it does. I want to feel confident in what I'm capable of, proud of how I show up for myself, and grateful for all I have learned. I want to be able to run a 5k without pain, get up and down off the ground with my grandkids or kids without help, and be able to travel to new places and walk all day discovering new things because I have the energy to sustain it.

Then, you could easily work backward and decide the steps that you will need to take to get from here to there. If you currently eat whatever is on the way home from work and that has a drive-thru, and you feel bloated and tired afterward, that probably isn't what you mean when you image nourishing your body with food. So then you get to define that for yourself. If right now you hate your body for how it looks, part of your goal will need to be that you start to create some space between you and all the messages that have told you the most important part of your body is how it looks.

Ep #107: Love In Practice

You'll have to differentiate your body's value from its aesthetic and start to integrate gratitude for how it functions and how it keeps you alive. What it's not... If your goal sounds like everything you don't want and it's all just the opposite of how you are now, that is not from love because that infers all the things that are now are wrong. It can't be loving if it's refusing to accept you now. If your goal is three digits only, and those three digits are the ones you think you should see on the scale in order to have the right body based on the BMI or the three digits you used to see when you liked yourself. You got the most compliments, or you looked the most like women you see on TV, that is not coming from love.

It's based on external measurements and reasons and not on your body and how it feels to live in it, and it's one-dimensional. You are not a number, and a number is not you. The reasons you want and value that number tell you everything. So, if you're like, a number goal is a perfectly reasonable and loving goal, Natalie. It's what I've always done, and it works. Well, first of all, if you have set a number goal yet again, it doesn't work because you're back at it.

Second of all, why did you pick that number? Tell yourself your reasons out loud, and then just pause after each one and notice how it feels. Part of this process of change, if it's from love, is helped focus, and if that's the case, then we have to talk about what it looks like to come from love when it comes to food because your health is directly impacted by what you eat. Obviously, there are non-food-related factors that play a role, like, genetics, for example.

But in terms of the ways you can have an impact on your health, food is at the top of that list. Coming from love when it comes to choosing what to eat, when, and how much, that connects directly to your body. When we're coming from love, we are considering what our body needs and what will feel good in our body. We are tuning in and listening to hunger signals, insatiety signals. We are honoring what our body wants.

Ep #107: Love In Practice

We are observing what our body doesn't seem to like or reacts unfavorably to. We can consult experts, sure, for information, but not to dictate to us what our body should eat more as a jumping-off point to experiment and find what works best for us. We stop when we're full. We undemonized and demoralize (words I made up) food to see it for what it is. It's just food. We learn to release food rules and restrictions, and we eat with full permission using our body and how it feels and responds as our guide.

What it's not, letting our mouth decide what we eat based on the taste experience only, following someone else's meal plan for us without regard to how we feel while we are doing it, not allowing foods because they are bad. Restricting eating as a punishment for the previous eating or in reaction to a number on the scale and ignoring our current level of capability, our current lifestyle, and adopting some extreme eating plan so that we can hurry up and lose weight. Overeating to the point of physical pain, rewarding yourself with food when you have been good.

All of these things disconnect us from and disregard our bodies. They are brain-centric solutions to a body issue. We have to involve our body in the decision-making if we are truly coming from love. So, let's pause here and address what I brought up earlier. That, coming from love doesn't always feel amazing. When you stop eating just at the point of satisfaction because you are learning to honor how your body feels, but you have been accustomed to eating until your plate is clean or eating until you feel numb or not even paying attention and just eating unconsciously, this stopping will feel really uncomfortable.

Your toddler brain will throw tantrums. You will feel like your brain is on fire, but knowing you're honoring you will still feel better than giving in and over-eating again. I don't want to necessarily say love is sometimes painful, but I just thought about being a mom and the times when I've had to release a little bit of control or let go of my kids because they are growing up. Of the time when my first child came home from his first day of first grade, his very first day of school lunch at school, and he told me that he couldn't get his chocolate milk open.

Ep #107: Love In Practice

He didn't know who to ask for help, so he just sat there, and he didn't drink his milk, and that had been one of the things he was most excited for, school lunch like the big kids, and his choice of chocolate milk or regular.

You know I wanted to go to the school every single day at the beginning of lunch and open that milk for him. You know I did, but I didn't because that was just one of the first of a million moments when loving him looked like letting him hurt or fail or fall down and figure it out so that he could become who he is today, confident, capable, conscientious, and opening all of his beverages like a champ. He's 20, so I mean, of course, he is, but also I know some of his 20-year-old friends whose moms still do their laundry.

So, it happens. It's very easy to think love is always saying yes. Here's what you want to do, notice how in that moment when you put your fork down because you are full and you feel the discomfort of wanting to keep going like you usually do, disregarding how your body feels to placate your toddler brain's demands and you honor it. How that feels so much different than when you choose instead to pick the fork back up and keep eating anyway; really tune into the difference.

Coming from love when things don't go as planned, like, literally you don't eat what you planned or you don't plan at all, or the scale doesn't move in a week. It looks and sounds like a compassionate curiosity. It's wondering what happened with a genuine interest in discovering what happened. It's looking back at what triggered the eating outside of what was planned or what's standing in the way of you creating a plan in the first place? Or hypothesizing and experimenting why the scale isn't moving?

It's understanding instead of judgment. Kindness instead of criticism. It's looking forward only after being willing to see where we are and how we got here. What it's not, saying who cares or it doesn't matter, and then continuing to eat without regard for your body or your values—being ruthless to yourself in your mind. Making it mean something about who you are as a human.

Ep #107: Love In Practice

Coming from love, when it comes to moving your body/exercise looks a little like how we do it with food and eating. It's about listening to your body, what it enjoys, what it needs, what feels good and helpful. It's about expanding our definition of movement to include what feels like joy and pleasure as well as what feels challenging and strengthening. What it's not, a way to balance out or punish yourself for the crap you ate.

Sometimes love for me with exercise looks like showing myself what I'm capable of as I pushed myself to sprint for the last minute on the treadmill at Orange Theory when I don't think I have it in me. My lungs are burning, my heart is pounding, my legs are nearing exhaustion, but it feels like love to know that I can stop and walk or can see what I'm made of; how mentally strong I am. How much I can do when I believe, and I push out of my comfort zone.

The way I encourage and cheer myself on in that last minute is some of the fiercest love I feel for myself. It's doing something really physically hard and being so dang proud at the end of it I just want to hug myself. But, sometimes it looks like listening when my body says, not today. Sometimes I do walk, and that is love too. But I know the difference when I'm walking instead of running, and it's a love-fueled decision or a fear-fueled one.

I know when to push and when to listen because I've cultivated that skill. One situation, one decision at a time. There's a whisper from the loving core of you, a soft yes, a gentle thank you. But you have to tune in and listen and be willing to hear the answer. That is what coming from love looks like and feels like. Okay, everybody, here's to love in action in your life. I'll see you soon.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of *Weight Loss Success* with Natalie Brown. If you want to learn more about how to lose weight for the last time, come on over to itbeginswithathought.com. We'll see you here next week.